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Letter dated 13 December 2005 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Uganda to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Upon instructions of my Government, I have the honour to forward to you herewith an aide mémoire on the situation of internally displaced persons in northern Uganda (see annex).

I will be very grateful if you can have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Adonia **Ayebare**
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 13 December 2005 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Uganda to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Situation of internally displaced persons in northern Uganda

Introduction

Pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolutions 1296 (2000) and 1265 (1999), the United Nations Secretary-General has presented his report on the Protection of Civilians in armed Conflict Document S/2005/740 of November 28, 2005. While the report has taken more than five years to prepare, inaccuracies regarding the situation of IDPs in Northern Uganda persist. One would have expected that the time lag provided ample time to do adequate research, make the necessary consultations with the relevant government and civil society agencies to enable a clear and unbiased picture to be projected.

Using facts provided by this biased report which paints Uganda as the perpetrator of injustice rather than the victim, Canada and the Secretary-General are urging the Security Council to put Uganda on its agenda. In this regard, they are equating Northern Uganda to Darfour, DRC and Nepal.

Situation in Northern Uganda

The International Community will recall that the situation in Northern Uganda is the result of the activities of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). LRA, once supported by the Sudan, is a criminal band of people that have, since their inception in 1986, made it a policy to attack civilians under the pretext that they are fighting the government of Uganda. They do not confront the armed forces of Uganda; i.e. UPDF and LDU. they attack civilians, abduct them and destroy civilian infrastructure including schools and hospitals. On the contrary, the UPDF and LDU operating in the area do not attack civilians. They protect them. The situation is, therefore, not comparable to that in the Darfour region of the Sudan. In the latter, the government is fully engaged in the banditry spearheaded by the Janjaweed while in Uganda the government is engaged in a struggle to protect the population. Any comparison between the two as the UN Secretary-General does is clearly unfortunate. It is unacceptable and masks a politically activist attitude that should be beyond his office. The protestations by Canada are equally misplaced.

The LRA created an atmosphere of insecurity in a large part of Northern Uganda. They have abducted children whom they brutalize and turn them into killing machines. As abductions and killings increased, the general population felt that they had to run somewhere for protection. In all cases, they ran towards UPDF camps providing an additional responsibility to the forces deployed to fight the rebels. In the midst of this, government felt it prudent to create a structural framework that could allow the army to effectively protect the people and pursue the LRA at the same time. Hence organized IP camps were born. As the fighting increased and pressure mounted on the LRA, attacks on civilians intensified. This created further displacement and strained the capacity of UPDF to undertake the two Missions simultaneously. (The UPDF had just gone through a Reduction in Force exercise at the behest of the donors who wanted a reduction in the defence budget.)

However, with the understanding of donors and the attendant increase in the defence budget, the army has now secured enough defence assets including troop carriers, helicopters, etc. thus enhancing its mobility and capacity to confront the LRA effectively. It is now clear that the LRA is in the throes of its extermination. The co-operation among the SPLA/M, the Sudanese Defence Forces, and UPDF has further deprived the LRA of the hideouts in Southern Sudan to which it used to retreat. A real possibility of the end of their senseless rebellion is finally in sight. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has indicted the LRA's top leadership thus exerting further pressure on them. The rank of this leadership and a few troops have run to the DRC while others are roaming the bushes of Southern Sudan and Northern Uganda in small bands. They mount terrorist attacks on unescorted aid convoys and villages. Such actions are timed to maximize press coverage and publicity. However, one thing is certain, Uganda is on top of the situation. Any international intervention at the tail end of the conflict will not be useful. It will just create unnecessary complications.

Role of the International Community

Uganda appreciates the humanitarian assistance given by the International Community and Civil society. The magnitude of their assistance is well received and appreciated. She might not have, on her own, effectively managed to handle the humanitarian aspects of the situation. However, accepting this assistance does not in itself mean that she is incapable of doing anything. We have undertaken humanitarian and development work

in the region. The Northern Uganda Reconstruction Project and Northern Uganda Social Action Fund are some of the interventions that we have undertaken to address the short, medium and long term needs of the region. Indeed various government agencies including the Ministry of Disaster Preparedness in the Prime Minister's Office have been effectively engaged in the humanitarian aspects in the area. We have also adopted an IDP policy that emphasizes security, human freedom and dignity and self-reliance. A Rehabilitation and Development Plan is under consideration. It will emphasize issues of sustainable peace, social cohesion and long-term development.

Security Situation

A few weeks ago, Uganda government announced a move to resettle 700,000 IDPs in their original homes. This move was occasioned by the tremendously improved security situation. So improved is the situation that IDPs on the recommendation of their elected local leadership and government are willing to return to their homes. It is, therefore, surprising that countries like Canada are pushing for the inclusion of Uganda on the agenda of the Security Council. What we need now is increased funding to support resettlement not any other action as contemplated by the propagators of this line.

Uganda believes that the situation in Northern Uganda is an internal matter on which she is the only one that can recommend, call for, and initiate action as she sees fit. At the moment, with the improved security, the main challenges remain resettlement of IDPs, rehabilitation of the damaged social infrastructure, social rehabilitation, extreme poverty, and underdevelopment. Massive funds will be needed to address these challenges. Uganda on her own cannot undertake them. International intervention by way of funding will be needed. The International Community is called upon to assist. It is with this in view that we welcome and support the UN Secretary-General's humanitarian appeal for US$223 million. On our part, we shall endeavour to ensure that peace and security reigns.

Conclusion

Uganda wishes to request members of the UN Security Council to avoid the alarmism that has characterized debate on the situation in Northern Uganda. This line, championed by Mr. Jan Egeland, the Under-Secretary-General for

Humanitarian Affairs is unacceptable. It is a blatant disregard of facts on the ground and manifests a politically activist attitude that Uganda finds self-serving. We request that the Council ignores such call and appreciates the efforts of the government of Uganda to restore peace, security and human dignity to the affected part of Northern Uganda. To do otherwise will be a slap in the face for a country that has single-handedly fought terrorism for a considerable period of time. Peace is in sight as the combined elements of peace in Southern Sudan, and the DRC, and the effectiveness of UPDF, have come into play.